

DID JESUS DIE ON FRIDAY?

By James Crumpton

How could there be three days and three nights from late Friday afternoon until early Sunday morning? At the most, there could only be two nights, one day, and a part of another! Had the Scriptures only said three days, we could have understood them to mean a part of three days, since both in and out of the Scriptures we use the word to mean only a portion of a day. However, the Scriptures specify “three days and three nights,” and thus verbal inspiration demands three twenty-four hour days.

It is good for us to note the difference in the Roman day, the Jewish day, and our present day. THE ROMAN DAY began at 6:00 A.M. and closed at 6:00 the next morning. THE JEWISH DAY began at sunset and closed at the next sunset (or from about 6:00 P.M. to the next 6:00 P.M.). OUR DAY begins at midnight and closes the next midnight.

The Lord Jesus was placed on the cross about 9:00 A.M. our time and was there until about 4:00 P.M. It was on Wednesday! He was taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb before sunset— before the beginning of the sabbath. Note that this was not the beginning of the regular weekly sabbath at sunset on Friday, but a “high sabbath”—a Passover sabbath which came on Thursday that week! [See Lev. 23:5-7, where we find that the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was a sabbath day.] At about sunset on Thursday He had been in the grave one day and one night. At about sunset on Friday, He had been in the grave two days and two nights. Then, just after the three full days and nights, He arose. He arose as it began to dawn the first day of the week (just after sunset Saturday, our time). The women came early Sunday morning, our time, but He was already gone. The expression “on the third day” in the Gospels referring to His resurrection would be “after the third day” in our way of saying it.

Many have sunrise services commemorating the resurrection, and we see nothing wrong with that. It would be fine to have a high noon service commemorating His resurrection. But maybe we should have a sunset service.

He arose about sunset on Saturday. And that was sunset for our sins—because they were gone forever. Hallelujah!!! [Used by permission from *Maranatha!!!*, April 1982, Westside Baptist Church, P.O. Drawer 1425, Natchez, MS 39121]

The following question and answer from *Bible Questions Answered* by William Pettingill offers more about the timing of the resurrection:

Question: “I have a problem which you might help me with, if you will. You stated that the crucifixion of our Lord took place on Wednesday, basing the statement on Mt. 12:40 and other passages. This is reasonable, but even more often is the resurrection referred to as on the third day. Remembering that the Jews reckoned their days from evening to evening, if Christ were crucified on Wednesday, the resurrection would be on at least the fourth day after. I believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, and hence believe that there must be some explanation, although I do not understand it.”

Answer: It is true that the resurrection day is often referred to as the third day. But it is also referred to as “after three days” (Mk. 8:31); “within three days” (Mk. 14:58); “in three days” (John 2:19); and after “three days and three nights” (Mt. 12:40).

I, too, believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, and our problem is to find the harmony between all these expressions.

That harmony, as I believe, is to be looked for in connection with idiomatic expression. You know that there is such a thing as usage, and as some one has said, "Any usage is good usage if there be enough of it." In our English language we fall into usage which at first seems to be entirely contrary to grammar, and yet we go on using expressions which finally find their place in our English dictionaries because the usage becomes so common.

Now, then, if it can be found that "on the third day" was an expression used among the Jews as equivalent to "within three days" or "in three days" or "after three days and three nights," then our problem is solved. And I think there is just such a solution to be found in the Word of God itself. Please look at Esther 4:16, where Queen Esther is quoted as saying: "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day." Now look at the first verse of chapter 5: "Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house." You see here the expression "on the third day" is equivalent to "after three days and three nights."

Now look again at II Chron. 10:5, where Rehoboam said: "Come again unto me after three days." And yet in the 12th verse it reads: "So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the third day." Here you will see that "after three days" is the exact equivalent, according to the Hebrew usage and idiom, of "the third day."

Now, does not this warrant us in saying that the expression in Mt. 12:40, "So shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" is to be regarded as equivalent to the language of Lk. 24:21, "To-day is the third day since these things were done?" (Pettingill, *Bible Questions Answered*).